

HU's Second On-Campus Food Pantry Location Comes to Blackburn Student Center



(from left to right) HUSA leaders Aaron Johnson, Nia Naylor, and Murphy Jones join Howard University President Ben Vinson III (center) and Vice President of Student Affairs, Cynthia Evers (far right), to celebrate the opening of the student pantry in the Blackburn Student Center. (Courtesy of the HUSA Instagram page)

By: MyAhna Alston

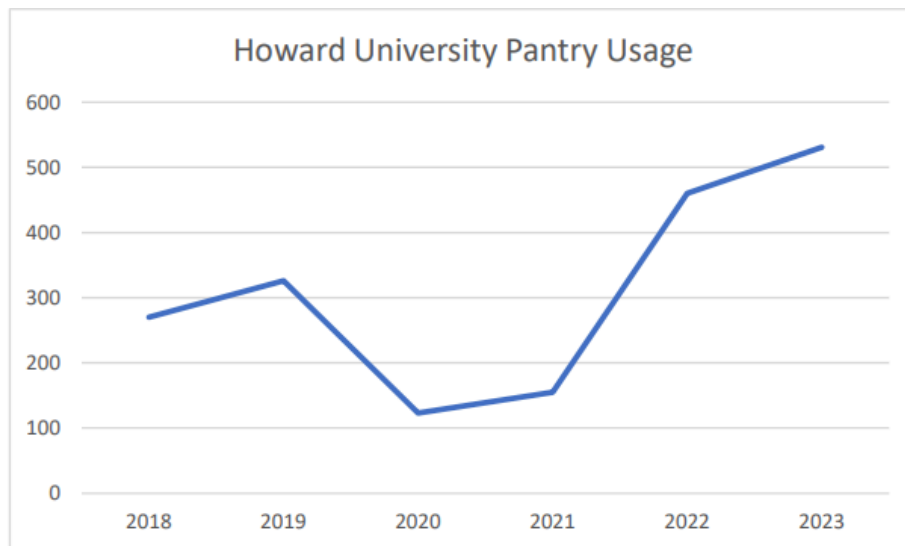
Howard University's food pantry on Howard's Campus – also known as The Store@HU – has relocated to the former space of the Market at Blackburn in Armour J. Blackburn University Center, and is now open to all current students.

The Howard community, including faculty and administration, staff, and students attended the event. After the ribbon-cutting, attendees went inside to take pictures of the pantry, outfitted with refrigerators and shelves stocked with perishable and nonperishable foods. The university's second pantry opening especially signifies the Mecca's commitment to addressing food insecurity among its students.

“Food insecurity is a global issue; and we see that we have students, who matriculate here at this university, they struggle with it and actually at all universities across the globe,” said Dr. [first

name] Fluitt, the Executive Director for Outreach & Engagement at Howard, who also coordinated the Blackburn pantry opening event.

This is the university's second pantry location, and currently the only one fully-operating on campus. as The original College Hall South pantry space is being used to store donations and supplies for the Blackburn site. However, this could change—according to Director of Student Services Dr. Paris Adon, whose team is the primary point of contact for the larder.



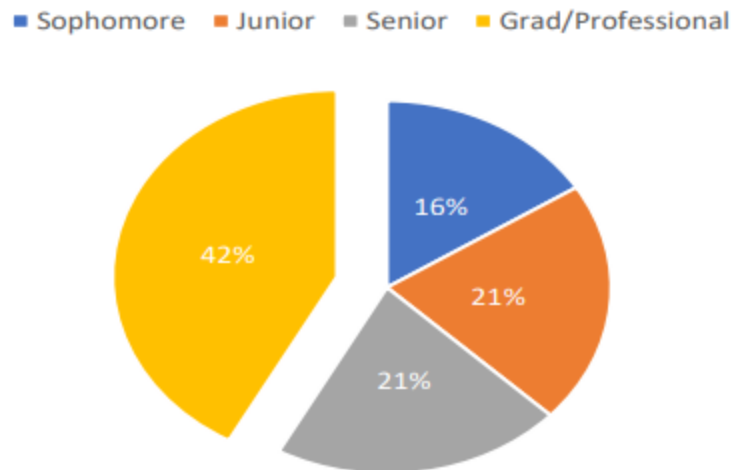
A summary chart of usage trends at the Howard University Pantry. *(Courtesy of the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs).*

“Most people are just getting wind of the pantry because we moved to another location. But it's been serving the community for a substantial amount of time, and it's done a substantial amount of work for years,” Adon added.

Current faculty members, including Ericka Byrd, who runs the pantry daily, also credits the pantry's relocation and growing popularity to Blackburn being a central location on campus, which makes the pantry more accessible and visible to students.

Howard's storeroom currently serves more than 612 students, and the need continues to grow, according to data from the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. The Blackburn pantry is open on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday of every week. Students are required to make an appointment and receive confirmation before entering the pantry.

“This is not something that one should feel shame about. Food is a basic necessity..... the right to eat, to drink, and to have a meal, and so if you find that you are in need and you do need support, know that we are here to support you,” Dr. Fluitt said.



Demand is growing among both undergraduate and graduate student populations at Howard University, according to pantry usage data from February 2023. Courtesy of the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs

Presently, there’s an average of 85 appointments scheduled, with approximately 30-35 students who visit the pantry monthly. Fewer than 10% of those students are repeat visitors.

Fluitt revealed that the university’s Office of Student Services is partnering with Sodexo to offer vegetarian and vegan food items and expand their international offerings to make the initiative more inclusive. The pantry is also stocked with hygiene products, cleaning products and school supplies.

The pantry is primarily equipped with the help of donations from community partners, students, faculty members, alumni and nonprofit organizations in the area. “For us to keep the pantry stocked, the need is there [with donations] also,” Byrd pointed out.

Anyone seeking to donate to the pantry can contact Adon or Byrd by email. Monetary donations can be made through the Office of Student Services’ pantry development office.

Howard students can make an appointment at the pantry by clicking [here](#) and completing the form. To apply for D.C. SNAP Benefits, students can visit the DC online benefits portal, [District Direct](#), or download the mobile app.